



# SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF NORTH-EAST REGION AND ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Dr. Nitul Gogoi

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Sankaradeva Mahavidyalaya, P.O-Pathalipahar, Lakhimpur, Assam -784163.

## ABSTRACT

Higher education plays a crucial role in national development and socio-economic transformation of the society. It is the quality higher education that decides the quality resources of the country. Higher education would help people of north east to form a larger picture of the issues and help them overcome their regional or cultural insecurities. The problems of poverty and unemployment cannot be solved unless we create job opportunities for employment. The present study is aimed at analysis and highlights the role of higher education in eradicating socio-economic problems of North East India.

**KEY WORDS:** Higher Education, Poverty and Unemployment, Socio-Economic problems, North-East India.

## INTRODUCTION:

India is a vast country with amazing diversities spread across its length and breadth. The northeastern part of India comprises of eight small states namely: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim. This region covers 7.9 percent of India's total land mass. The North East is known to be one of the most bio-diverse regions of the world. Nearly two-third of the region is under forest whose coverage varies from state to state. The region can be divided into three geographical areas-the Shillong plateau, the North Eastern hill basin and the Brahmaputra valley. About 70 percent of the regions are hilly and mountain. The region has got high strategic and economic importance as it shares international boundaries with China, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan. In spite of being blessed with mesmerizing scenic beauty and huge natural resources, the north east for some obvious reasons could not develop economically as compare to the other part of the country.

The lack of development in northeast coupled with the people's feeling of isolation, deprivation and threat to their indigenous cultures is the root cause behind the growth of insurgency in the region. Due to prolonged insurgency, the process of industrialization and economic growth had taken a backseat. Besides insur-

gency and underdevelopment there also exist other social problems such as human trafficking, drug abuse and HIV.

The north east states witnessed rapid increase of literacy rates in the post-independence period. Government's policy of free elementary education and higher enrolments of females in schools are some of the contributing factors to this positive development. However, on the other hand, in case of higher education, the northeast faces serious limitations. There has been growing trend of students from northeast migrating to other Indian cities for higher education. The higher education facilities in the northeast are still largely concentrated in the urban areas and situated mostly in and around the state capitals. This has made the higher educational opportunities to be more urban centric in the northeast. Therefore, the rural people from remote areas find it difficult to continue higher studies. Besides this, the technical and professional courses offered by private institutions are generally very expensive and so the poor people are unable to afford them. It needs to be stressed that a lot of problems in northeast can be eradicated by simply creating equal opportunities for the people from all sections of the society. For this creation of opportunities, the role of higher education imperative. The brief socio-economic profiles of these states are summarized below.

**Table 1:**  
**Socio-Economic Indicators of North-East Region**

States	Area (in sq. km)	Population	Density of Population (in per sq. km)	Literacy Rate (in %)
Assam	78550	31169272	396.8	73.18
Arunachal Pradesh	83743	1382611	16.5	66.95
Manipur	22347	2721756	121.8	79.85
Meghalaya	22720	2964007	130.5	75.48
Mizoram	21081	1091014	51.8	91.58
Nagaland	16579	1980602	119	80.11
Sikkim	7096	607688	85.6	82.20
Tripura	10491.69	3671032	349.9	87.75
Overall North East	262607.69	45587982	158.99	75.60
Overall India	3,287,260	1,210,193,422	372.6	74.04

Source: As per Census 2011

## OBJECTIVE:

The objective of this paper is to identify various socio-economic problems and role of higher education in this context.

## METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on secondary data collected from reputed journals, books, news paper, internet sources etc.

## Socio-Economic Problems of North East Region:

The critical role of higher education in accelerating the pace of socio-economic transformation of society through the development of highly skilled manpower has been duly recognized in India all through the plans. The importance of higher education is constantly growing and knowledge based industries are now occupying the centre stage in the development process of the nation. Hence, attempt

has been made to analysis the socio-economic conditions and then traced briefly the evolution of higher education system in north east region. The region has been facing some social and economic problems which are interrelated, interdependent and often mutually reinforcing to each other. Some of the major problems are discussed as follows:

### (a) Insurgency:

Insurgency is the major problem inflicting the region. With the passage of time it has increasingly become more complex and difficult to understand as their objectives, role and activities varied widely. The problem of insurgency has become the stumbling block in the course of development. It founded every development strategy and hampered all the developmental works. Kidnapping, extortion, killing, bandh, strikes and curfews have become the order of the day. Today, the region has become the killing field and specialized in the export to death bod-

ies. The prolonged struggles due to insurgency have been one of the main factor for the economic underdevelopment of the region. The serious lack of infrastructure, industries and educational facilities has further contributed to a range of other social problems in north east.

#### (b) Human Trafficking:

Today whole world is facing this irrespective to caste and creed. But alarmingly North East India is becoming the hot spot of human trafficking from all corner of the globe. Human trafficking has recently emerged in north eastern region of India because of the diminishing traditional social value along with large levels of corruption. The corruption is so deep that many law enforcement officers are involved in the trafficking industry. Young girls and women from north east India are taken from their native places to faraway states of India or outside India for bonded labour and for sex business. As per the government reports in every eight minutes a child goes missing in our country and most of them are from West Bengal and North East India. Most of the cases of human trafficking in Assam occur in the area of tea estates where people are illiterate and alcoholic. In the north eastern region of India human trafficking takes place within the states or in India and across the border of Myanmar, Bangladesh and Nepal due to poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and traditional thinking about the women section.

#### (c) Unemployment and Poverty:

According to the Planning Commission report, the poverty is generally rising in the north eastern region than other states of India. The report indicates that Assam has the highest persons (116.4 lakh) living in below poverty line, Manipur 12.5 lakh, Meghalaya 4.9, Mizoram 2.3 lakh, Tripura 6.3 lakh, Nagaland 4.1 and Arunachal Pradesh 3.5 lakh. It has been found that more than half a million young and educated people in north eastern states are jobless. Many would agree that it is because of rising poverty and unemployment that the north east is submerged into social problems like insurgency or human trafficking.

#### (d) Underdevelopment:

In terms of natural resources the northeastern India is blessed with minerals like oil, natural gas, coal, dolomite, limestone, quartzite etc. More than 10 per cent of all forest products requirement of India comes from this region. Northeast has also got high potential to generate hydropower which can not only sufficiently meet the power demand of the region itself but also it can be exported to other parts of the country. In spite of such abundant resources the northeast is not economically as prosperous. Moreover, the possibilities for industrialization, agriculture based business opportunities, tourism and border trade with neighboring countries has not yet been fully utilized.

**Role of Higher Education in Eradicating Socio-economic Problems of Northeast**  
Higher education has given ample proof of its viability over centuries and of its ability to change and to induce change and progress in society. Owing to the scope and pace of change, society has become increasingly knowledge-based so that higher learning now act as essential components to cultural, socio-economic and environmentally sustainable development of individuals, communities and nations. Higher education empowers people to actively participate in economic development, social awareness, technological progress, political decision-making and in the governance of the country. Higher education itself is confronted therefore with formidable challenges and must proceed to the most radical change and renewal it has ever been required to undertake, so that our society especially north eastern region which is currently undergoing a profound crisis of values, can transcend mere economic considerations and incorporate deeper dimensions of morality and spirituality. Menon (2007) indicates in his study that the problem of insurgency, which in many ways is one of the root causes for economic underdevelopment in northeast has to be solved permanently. The genesis of most of the insurgencies in northeast is either to preserve the unique indigenous identity or it's the lack of economic development and opportunities for the large majority of people or both. This prevailing sense of alienation, exploitation and deprivation among certain section of the population in northeast can be positively challenged by promoting and facilitating higher education. Higher education systems should enhance their capacity to live with uncertainty, to change and bring about change and to address social needs and to promote solidarity and equity. Therefore, creating opportunities through higher education can effectively tackle the problems of insurgency in this region. The expansion of facilities in higher education should be planned broadly on the basis of man-power needs and employment opportunities. At present, there is an over enrolment of this open-door policy and consequently there is a growing incidence of unemployment amongst them. On the other hand, there is a shortage of professional specialists and there is a consequent need to increase the facilities in professional courses such as agriculture, engineering, medicine etc. Any economy cannot come out of the stagnation phase unless new industrialization policies are adopted. The primary requirements for industrialization are the availability of human resources. And it has been proven beyond doubt that skilled human resource is a huge global competitive advantage. In the era of globalization the words development and knowledge are complementary to each other. We cannot create a supportive environment for development unless we have a culture where we can inculcate knowledge. The main contribution of education for rural development should be in terms of preparing the necessary conditions for development by awareness of an insight into the social reality and processes. Its contribution to rural development may be primarily in the form of helping people realize and use their individual as well as collective and community strengths and

resources, and help them develop new skills both process or social skills and technical or work skills relevant to programmes of rural development. Although significant progress has been achieved to enhance the access of women to higher education, various socio-economic, cultural and political obstacles continue in many states in our country to impede their full access and effective integration. Higher education can also help us to develop human resources who can take up leadership roles in furthering the cause of socio-economic development of the region, especially for the underprivileged sections of the society. One of the goals of education for integrated rural development is to promote social awareness of problems amongst the rural communities, and awareness of the dynamics of social reality, leading to action by the community. Higher education create change agents for the society in the form of entrepreneurs, social activists, intellectuals, and writers who can fight social problems, set examples for others and positively motivate the youth towards building a better future for themselves. In order to deal with the socio-economic problems of northeast, we must have a proper framework for devising the higher education policy for northeast.

#### CONCLUSION:

The rich natural and human resources available in the region could not be utilized to the full extent mainly due to the geo-political condition, including ever deteriorating law and order, which has a lot of implication on the development of must needed infrastructure. The negligence of the central government and due to the problems of insurgency at present resulted into the gross deficiency of infrastructure in the region. Young people in all countries are both a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. But the lack of educational and career opportunities is the leading cause for a large number of young populations of this region moving and setting other parts of the country. Therefore higher education create a job opportunities for the young generations of north east. Their imagination, ideals, considerable energies and vision are essential for the continuing development of the societies in which they live. The problems that young people face as well as their vision and aspiration are essential components of the challenges and prospects of today's societies and future generations.

#### REFERENCES

1. E.K. Das, (2016) Human Trafficking in North East Region: A Study with Global Perspectives, Journal of Humanities and Social Science, Vol.21, Issue 5,
2. Menon, S. (2007), New Industrial Policy for North East India, India's Northeast Economy: Problems and Prospects, Icfai University Press, Hyderabad
3. Pillai, P.A (2007), Economic Development Interventions in North East: A Mirage India's Northeast Economy: Problems and Prospects, Icfai University Press, Hyderabad.
4. Vanlalchhawna (2006), Higher Education in North East India, Mittal Publications, New Delhi.